

# MY MARJONARY

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ROBERT CARLTON BROWN



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# MY MARJONARY



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BY

ROBERT CARLTON BROWN

BOSTON

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## DEDICATION

AUX MES FRERES

You daredevil dilettantes  
In *vers libre*.  
Amazing amateurs!  
Why have you burned  
Your rhyming dictionaries  
Behind you  
(The one hope you had)  
And gone in for angel treading?  
What do you cribbers of the classics  
Know  
About rag-time  
As it's thumped out  
In a nigger joint.  
Go back to your pale  
Hermaphrodite gods,  
Sing about Circe  
And Amphahedalon  
(The old Greek goose  
Who got talked about  
Because of his  
Pallid passion for  
Amorthorincus)  
(That great Greek goddess  
Whose sensitive nose was sprained  
By a passing whiff  
Of garlic.)  
You wretched rhymsters

Imaginary imagists!  
Cut out your cant  
About cadences;  
Go back to rhyming  
“Dear” with “tear”  
As you were born to do.  
To write free verse  
You’ve got to  
Be  
Free verse.

*Robert Carlton Brown*

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# MY MARJONARY



## MY MARJONARY

**I**F I were not a practical workaday man with an ambition to make enough money to keep me continually moving about in comfort, I would rent a small store on a bookish New York street for thirty-eight dollars a month, and peddle second-hand books to all comers. In the rear of the shop I would have a curious little English living-room, and off that a conservatory devoted to four-leaf clovers. By careful selection, cultivation, and Burbanking, in the course of two or three years I would have a yearly crop of, say, ten pounds of four-leaf clovers. I would carefully crystallize and candyize the entire ten pounds by some ingenious method I have not yet invented, so that, counting the sugar, I should have about fifteen pounds of my product to sell. My price would be ten dollars a pound, and I would stipulate with my confectioner customers that they put only one four-leaf clover in each pound box, so my lucky pieces would never become common.

My clover patch would yield one hundred and fifty dollars a year and I would not allow the business to increase too rapidly, though after forty or fifty years of work I wouldn't mind turning out twenty pounds each year, at twelve dollars a pound.

In a sunny little room behind the conservatory I would raise mules. Not the braying mule of commerce, but flower mules, bird mules, and fish mules. By some ingenious method which I would perhaps be compelled to originate, I would cross fan-tailed Japanese gold-fish, dwarf bronze marigolds, and liquid-throated canaries in such fashion that the resultant mule would blossom from a flower-stalk, as though it were a bird with a gold-fish tail in a little private tree of its own. There my marjonary would sit all day and sing, languidly waving her lacy fan-tail back and forth while proudly pluming her blazing feathers, scales, and petals. I would teach my marjonary to eat from my hand and wear a cocked cap like a bold Spanish commandando. Marj should live on candied four-leaf clovers at ten dollars a pound and never know want.

I would sell her seeds and eggs and roe to the highest bidders, bids being received only from spoiled babies, boyish bachelors, fond mothers, dream-eyed maidens, and plain folk who have lived long and fully and learned to love every littlest thing.

I would not expect to make much money from Marjy, but my books would keep me, and my four-leaf clover patch would bring me luxury. Half a dollar a day to spend just as I wished, half a dollar to keep me in cigarettes, liqueurs, and

Turkish rugs. I would require a Persian prayer rug, a box of Egyptian cigarettes, a number of old books, and lots of leisure in which to sit in the center of my prayer rug, read romantic Arabian tales, and feed my Marjy seed pearls and crisp combination salad. And my book-store boy would wait on the shop those times I wished only to sit idle and watch my four-leaf clovers grow.

I think of this to-day because I have again sold my soul in commerce. I have dragged my ideals in the mud ; I have pushed away the tender, clinging arms of Art with my gold-grubbing fingers ; I have sopped my soul in my ink-pot.

## THE AQUARIUM KEEPER

**I** CHEW tobacco moistly  
And keep the aquarium.  
My gold fish are goopy eyed  
And droopy;  
The lady ones wear bridal veils  
And float about the drawing room  
Languorously toying with their  
Gorgeous Japanese fans  
(That stupid folks call fins)  
Closing and opening them dreamily,  
Like soft-eyed Spanish senoritas;  
Flirting with me,  
Flashing filmy handkerchiefs of crepe  
And lace before my fascinated eyes.  
Pruning their weeping willow tails  
For my praise.

I keep a covey of speckled fish  
Like quail  
And when they fly up in a flock  
Greedy gobbling bubbles at the  
Top of their tank  
I look sharply about  
To make sure no sportsman  
Has smuggled in a gun  
To take a pot shot at my pets.

Stupid fish I'd rather eat than look at,

But my gay, gorgeous ones  
Fill the eye better than the belly.  
My velvet ones,  
Pattern models for silks  
By Paul Poiret.  
My fluttery, friendly,  
Moving fellows;  
Futurist fancies  
Cubist conceptions  
And Whistlerian butterflies  
With peacock tails  
Straight from Paradise  
That little Japs  
Would fly for colorful kites  
From moss green river banks  
Into the swirling blue sky  
As they do in Hiroshige prints.  
I laugh at my funny fish,  
Poke my finger playfully  
At the glass  
Where lurk my spunky, grumpy  
Spiteful ones.

Fish are human.

I've some that swarm like bees around a queen,  
Or cannibals about a missionary.  
Silly-headed, bobby ones  
Always agitated

Fluttering about  
On futile-minded businesses.  
Athletic ones that go in for  
Swimming.  
And a lot as common and bickeringly content  
As chirping sparrows.

I never like to pass the ponds  
Of my goopy nightmare fish  
After dining late.  
I take out my key a bit nervously  
And slip softly in,  
Skirting round the other corridor  
Where the ghoul eyed submarine fellows  
Blink all night,  
I sneak as softly as I may  
To bed  
Without disturbing the ugly looking imps  
Whose orbs glint phosphorescently at me;  
Never looking into evil  
Bad luck fire opal eyes  
Or pausing where ghost fish glide;  
Restless souls that haunted hulks  
Of sunken ships in former incarnations;  
Their flashing eyes shooting looks at me like  
Serpent's fangs of flame;  
Crafty, greedy watchers  
That follow my course all the way to bed  
As I pass along the chilly corridor.

In the morning  
With a fresh quid in my cheek  
I chew tobacco moistly  
And pass boldly through my aquarium,  
Coaxing modest rock fish from their hiding  
places,  
Watching my finny chameleons  
Change color like sixteen year old girls.  
I go to say good morning  
To my flappy old soft-backed sea turtle  
Who looks like a floating strip of wall paper.  
I crumble crackers with friendly fingers  
For my parrot fish,  
And sometimes wish I could throw  
A sort that resembles  
Sniffing pious hypocrites in pews  
To my big moray  
Who sits smug in a length of sewer pipe all day,  
Looks like a boa constrictor  
And eats like a pig.

Oh, I have a taste for fish.  
My most intimate ones  
Are open-eyed innocents,  
Some like buttercups,  
Others like petals of Japanese quince bloom.  
Sometimes I wonder  
Who washes the ears of my pink tinted  
Shell lustre dears.

And though I've worked here  
Most all my life  
I've never found out who keeps the colors  
Fresh  
On the hand-painted oriental ones  
Imported from Malay.

In the lot I've some chic little sets for rings.  
When I fall in love with a mermaid  
(If I can ever find one on land)  
I know a special black opal frisker  
I'm going to hang round her neck for a pendant.  
But I'll never get married  
Till I find a girl with hair of burnished gold  
As beautiful as the scales  
(Which I call petals)  
Of my Bermuda Brilliant.  
Teeth with the sheen of a shad.  
A look sparkling and iridescent  
Like my rainbow fish.  
But even if she never comes  
I'll keep jogging along content;  
Pruning my flower garden of fish,  
Looking after their teeth, tails and morals  
Like a mother would,  
Walking meditatively, watchfully  
Through the pleasant paths of my aquarium,  
Chewing tobacco moistly  
And feeling very much at home.

## WASTING WORDS

I PLAY with words.

Tossing in the air an armful of them, as a  
child reveling in autumn leaves.

Loving the crisp rustle as they cascade about my  
ears.

Again picking them up as wet pebbles, aglisten on  
a cool sea beach.

Making patterns of them—pictures—filling  
spaces with words as artists do with paints.

I pet and fondle a sentimental word until it purrs.

And clash with a rough one till it growls.

I am as human with words as I am with you.

Never exploiting them.

Never giving them an inch of advantage over me.

I know words

And they seek me out.

We are together ;

Important, both of us

And entirely useless,

Unless you need the thing we give.

## WHAT IS A NICKEL AT NIGHT

**L**OOSE of foot, with a jingling mind I'll  
dive out into night. Phosphorous flashes  
shall run along the edges of the world,  
crinkling and crackling like a fire cracker fuse;  
laughing with me, lighting me on my way.

I'll place my feet with no surety. I'll stumble  
and skip and fall into a ditch with the best of  
them. I'll be on my way.

There will come silver-toned hailings through  
the night. I will answer. And though my voice  
crack it will be clear to the callers. My voice  
cannot crack.

Hobgoblins will follow me, thinking to scare  
me and I will turn back to play with them, for  
they, too, are children on their playful side.

I will stop to eat dew damp toad stools with  
gnomes and rub their brown velvet noses. I will  
stride through the rail bonfires of sleeping tramps  
and they will curse me, and I will curse back, it  
being my night as well as theirs.

I will flutter up to an arc light and stare it in  
the face, without getting singed. For I am asbes-  
tos. I am myself. Bold and brave. I will give  
it back hot glare for hot glare and it will know  
me and laugh with me when we meet again and  
are older. For the arc light is as much a moth as  
I when the sun puts in appearance.

Oh, I will stay the whole night through and never blink an eye. A cat will come and wink at me with his wise mossy green orb and I will understand and go with him. The roof tops we will walk together, never prowling, slipping along with padded foot, springily, skipping gutters, poisoning on chimney tops, raising our backs and laughing at sleepers snug below.

I'll flirt with the lady in the moon and the bulge-faced man in the moon shall glower or grin. What care I? She is my lady as much as his. I will have no rivals.

And I shall stop to gaze at the orange, blue and red lights in the drug store and be glad that there can be something pretty in a drug store, a colored liquid to enjoy and not be forced to drink.

And then the garish light of a saloon shall lure me away. And I shall be so glad to be lured. I shall put my foot on the shining rail of brass and buy the bartender a drink; for if the world will not bring us together and set up the drinks I'll buy them myself. Five cents is a loaf of bread by day, but what's a nickle at night?

Oh, I'll chuck a dozing cabby under the chin and stop to help a bungling burglar pick an intricate lock. I'll throw good-morning kisses to the stars and go the round with the lamp-lighter, helping him happily in his motherly business of putting the night to bed.

## CHINESE DRAGON

**I**F I could draw a dragon;  
A crawly, sprawly,  
Twisty dragon,  
Spitting spluttering sparks like a red  
Chinese fire-cracker  
I should be happy.  
If I had the fantasy,  
The whimsy,  
To make a clutching, clawing,  
Writhing line,  
Expressing all the phantasmagoria  
I have,  
I should draw a dragon  
—A Chinese dragon—  
Using lots of rhythmic greens.

## CRYSTAL-GAZING

**L**OVE is the crystal into which I gaze. My neck muscles never tire with looking. For there I see something always new. Fresh. Pouting, rich, red lips; thin, salmon-colored tight ones. Fire-flies flirting with fans. Angle-worms squirming like oriental dancers. Babies with eyes and lips crinkling in laughter. Mothers cooing over cradles. Fathers sitting on bookkeeper's stools, like witches over cauldrons, adding long columns of figures and sometimes mixing into the cold commercial count baby's four shining new teeth or the price of a teddy bear.

I see strong sailors wrecked on coral reefs, lured by siren songs. The sirens, too, are there, cold, fishy, a bit scaly. I will not love a siren, unless she looks into my eyes.

I see in the vibrant crystal, vampires, harems, lone Methodist missionaries with consciences and tracts, black girls with eyes like hat-pin heads, round stomachs, necklaces and loin cloths. All are my lovers.

Voluptuous vases turning up blushing cheeks to my caress. Good goblets of wine I will fondle and desire. My heart shall leap to claim union with an elusive color. I will win a Whistler nocturne, marry a Japanese print and have love affairs with Boldinis all my life.

## MY LOVE

**M**Y LOVE is a tidy cannibal girl  
Far off on a pink coral isle.  
When I am pleased with her  
I crack cocoanuts with my strong white teeth  
And drop them bit by bit into her smiling mouth.  
Together we gnaw the bones of  
White men  
Ship-wrecked on our coral isle.  
And we laugh while we eat.  
Our digestion is robust  
We never take pink pills  
To condition our conscience.  
And when I am tired of my  
Wholesome love  
I ship back here in my submarine  
And write poems in this dull little room,  
Love poems to my dainty Duckewawa,  
Far off on our cannibal isle of coral.

## WHO SHALL THROW THE FIRST SHOE?

**W**HY do we talk?  
Why are we forever  
Hitting ourselves over the head

With words,  
To numb our intellect.  
If we cooed like doves  
Or barked like dogs  
How much better  
We would understand  
Each other.

What is the song the alley cat sings?

"Oh, love of Life

Oh, ni-ight of Love

I dreamt that I dwelt in ma-arble halls."

What is the song the alley cat sings?

It's the same as every overworked shop girl

Sobs to her pillow

On moonlit nights:

Merrrowwwwrrrrroooooowwwwwwww!

And what would the landlady say!

If the girl got up on the back fence

And yowled her pent-up longing for life?

And who would throw the first shoe?

## CIRCUS FOLLOWER

**L**URED by strong animal and saw dust  
Smells;  
Called by elephants trumpeting,  
Neighing pink-eyed horses,  
Glossy white;  
The roaring of  
Worn-tailed lions:  
To-night I join the circus:  
A stake driver,  
Handy man, hustler,  
With the show.  
Summoned by official bugle blare,  
Follower of the circus,  
Because it has need of me.  
Circus follower.

A happy moth whizzing round  
An arc light irresistible.  
Jingling to gladdening, thrilly music,  
(Our band wears bold red jackets,  
Blazing blue pants  
With stripes of purest gold.)  
Sailors may desert the navy  
When the food is on the bum  
And the band plays  
Sour notes,  
But no circus man

Ever left the saw dust long.  
They come back to the  
Thrilling thing,  
Like murderers.  
Wanting another look at  
Coons and kids,  
Crazy for the clatter of  
Rattling musical bones  
Glare  
Lights  
Joy.  
Oh, I will stick to  
The circus  
And roll in peanut shucks  
A foot deep  
Like a boy in a pile of leaves,  
Loving the speed of it,  
Maintaining all its  
Traditions of  
Triumphant tawdriness,  
Believing piously the eloquent extravagances  
Of our own press agent,  
Knowing they are true.  
Jumping as the head man  
Whistles  
For the fan fare to begin.  
Putting on a false beard and  
Parading proudly  
Round the ring

A Roman centurion  
As the lights burst aloud  
In gladness.  
Feeling like a million dollars in  
My tinsel.  
Wildest of dreams  
Come true  
In that proud moment of  
My marching round the ring,  
Leading the mount of a  
Slim limbed equestrienne.  
Oh, youth  
Joy  
Glitter  
Greatness.  
Spangles !  
Spangles !  
Caparisoned horses.  
Intensity.  
I boast the  
Bigness of Barnum.  
Sound  
Clowns  
Freaks  
Let the elephants come on first.  
The tuskies  
With jungley step  
(Daredevil trainers are  
Often rolled upon.)

Clowns—cowbells—green whiskers—  
Balloons—brooms—cannon—  
Impossible things.  
It's all untrue.  
A great, gorgeous dream.  
Oh, for three pairs of eyes  
To watch all at once  
The doings of the  
Three rings  
As I hustle about  
Carrying the props  
Running with ropes.

A breathing space.

Burlesque  
A bear on roller skates  
Japanese jugglers  
Gymnasts  
Trying to take themselves apart  
Like intricate puzzles.  
The professional pride  
Of all true performers  
As they bow at the end of their act  
Jump into their saw dust slippers  
And hurry off to make room for others.  
Cow boys, throats astretch  
With wild yells.  
The thudding of flare-eyed Texas ponies,

Girls in bandanas, gauntlets and  
Split skirts of kakhi.  
Whoopee!  
Waaawweeee! Yip!  
The lasso circling round like a  
Whoop snake biting its tail.  
Romantic riders  
Throwing themselves out of  
Saddles  
To pick up dropped handkerchiefs  
With their teeth  
Their noses bumping the ground  
As their horses race madly.  
Oh, the artists of the air.  
Twinkling-toed wire walkers  
Pink slippered kicks.  
Fluffy, bobbing skirts of  
Chiffon.  
Clowns tumbling off tables.  
Oh, I will work my way  
Up  
And be a clown.  
Someday I shall get to be  
A clown  
A circus clown  
With red triangles  
Licked out on my  
Chalked cheeks.  
And then I shall marry a

Twisty contortionist  
And we shall settle down  
To following the circus  
And raise a batch of  
Clever kids  
To tumble around in our tent  
And make us feel at home.

## FAT SKELETONS

**I** FEAR fat skeletons  
Thin ones thrill me not at all.  
The emaciated, jingling kind  
Kept in closets  
Don't scare me.  
The blanched white bones and  
Grinning skulls  
Of poor dead graveyard skeletons  
Give me no concern.  
But I have a sneaking horror  
Of the kind that stay alive  
And take on flesh  
Long after they should be  
Decently dead.  
I fear fat skeletons.  
Thin ones thrill me not at all.

## UNFOLDING

UNFOLDING  
Is living.  
Unfolding

Is the language of growth.

It is delightful to drop little Japanese water  
flowers

Into a bowl

And watch as the water

Dissolves the tight tissue circlet

About the moist fire-cracker

Allowing the thirsting bits of tinted pith

To swell with drinking

And unfold

Into joyous, bubbling, giggling

Conceptions of happy flowers.

It is almost as fascinatingly fanciful

As dropping beautifully tinted bits of ideas

Into one's own thinking bowl

And lying back, dreamily absorbed

In watching them

Unfold.

## FATHERHOOD

**A**S a boy  
I should be industrious  
At school,  
Learn a lot,  
Go seriously into some business,  
Work night and day  
To get married  
And support a wife.  
Then I should have children;  
Many of them;  
To buy pants and corsets for,  
Over a period of  
Twenty odd years,  
If none turned out  
An old maid or  
Good-for-nothing.  
I should slave this  
Best three-quarters of my life  
Paying off instalments on a house  
Where my kids could flirt  
And have fudge parties.  
I should do all this,  
Because I am a man  
And would be a model citizen,  
But I won't!  
I don't want to wake up  
After the breaking period

Of my life and find myself  
Old  
Thin  
Shrunk  
Narrow  
Full of wheezes and aches,  
From buying oleomargarine  
For my fat wife to trickle  
Down her epiglottis;  
From paying for little trousers  
With shiny black buttons on them  
For my boys.  
I *should* do all this.  
But I *shan't*.

## SUMMER AND GEESE

**H**ER eyes lighted like a child's,  
A look of loving all outdoors was in  
them.

"Oh, I was out in the snow!" she cried.

"Getting eggs from the woman under the hill.

And there were a dozen geese in her yard

Flapping and teetering happily on their crooked  
yellow legs

As the snow flakes showered down upon them."

She waved her arms with the free movement of  
wings;

A gorgeous white bird herself, frolicking with  
snow flakes.

The light of loving was in her eyes.

She gave me the picture

And I have put it with my treasures

In a handy place where I shall find it

In the summer

When the geese are gobbling June bugs on the  
lawn

And smacking their smooth yellow beaks over it.

I shall find it then and wish for winter

And wonder wistfully if she and I will be sharing  
pictures

When again the geese are revelling in the snow.

## I CANNOT WAIT TILL SPRING

**I** AM so beautiful to myself  
I must look very ugly to others.  
The things I do for spiritual expansion  
Growth and being  
Must ring false to many.  
I do not care.  
I cannot see ugliness in myself or others.  
All I can see in all of us  
Is a lack of interest in growth.  
People do not have to wait for Spring  
To burst their buds.  
Spring with some is the Day of Judgment.  
With others it shall come tomorrow.  
Yet man is a superior plant  
In which the sap is always stirring.

I cannot wait till Spring.

## BLACK CAT

**B**LACK cat  
Blinking at me  
Close your eyes!  
You cannot stand the light.  
In your gleaming eyes  
Shines something that passes my understanding.  
Probably I fear that look  
Because I cannot penetrate its meaning.  
Glaring at me, you might spring upon me  
As your fathers in the forest  
A thousand years back.  
But somehow I know you won't.  
Probably because I feed you  
And you cannot keep a fire yourself.

Black cat with wicked eyes  
It is your fear or hate of me that I do not under-  
stand.  
There, beast, close your eyes  
You dare not spring at my bare throat.  
For tonight you have made me an animal trainer.  
I crack my whip in your sullen face  
Insolently.  
You cringe.  
And spit.

Yes, tomorrow you may spring upon me

In an unguarded moment  
And sink your teeth into my white neck.  
But down, *down*, beast!  
I am your master now.  
My hand trembles as I crack the whip.  
You do not know that.  
And now I will drink whisky  
To steady my nerves  
But you shall never know why.

## THESE THINGS I LOVE

WISPS.  
Sprigs of bitter sweet.  
Strays.  
Curling grape-vine tendrils.  
Fragments.  
Unfinished songs, lost in the singing.  
Echoes from nothing.  
The quiver of an eyelash.  
A shattered fan.  
The timorous curl of a sensitive lip.  
A single hair fluttering in the wind.  
Dust from a moth's fat belly brushed off by a bit  
of black velvet.  
A broken butterfly wing.  
Wraiths.  
Trailing ends of smoke vanishing into ether.  
The breath of imagined perfumes.  
Things found and thrown away, or never found  
at all.  
Bits of shimmering Roman glass.  
A single line of a poem.  
The whiskered frond of a fern.  
Pictures wonderfully begun and never finished.  
A story without an end.  
Fingers idly caressing piano keys in search of  
more rhythm.  
Wastrel airs.

A single dandelion seed ballooning down the wind  
in search of a well-kept lawn to violate.  
A fuzzy fringe of mold on the rind of a Camembert cheese.  
These things I love.

## YOUR IDEA

**Y**OUR idea of romance is  
Sitting by the fire  
Being fed marshmallows,  
Having your stomach  
Filled and  
Rubbed.  
My notion of the thing  
Is doing something  
Different.  
Racing waves on wild sea-shores  
Braving the elements  
For a bit of breath and life.  
Doing things.  
Daring.  
Not sitting smug  
In one's chimney corner  
Patting a full stomach  
And romancing about that.

## KITE-FLYING I.

**I** MUST fly my kite today  
For I have done something;  
Achieved a little.

I must roll in meadows new  
With velvet grass,  
For this day has brought to me  
A thing I need.  
Making me all child again.

## KITE-FLYING II.

**W**ELL, I flew my kite  
Happily  
But such a little while ;  
For now I am back  
The kite trailing over my shoulder  
By its knotted string,  
Bumping along the uneven ground,  
Somewhat tattered.  
Yes, I am back from flying my kite,  
Perhaps a little sad  
That I did not keep it up longer  
Let out a little more string  
Or lose it forever in the air.  
Flying kites is fun  
It's coming home that's hard.

## POVERTY

**T**HE poor are always with us.  
Poverty is shivering in thin shoes  
Waiting in a bundle- or bread-line.  
Poverty is hoarding things one has used up,  
Keeping them in attics  
To attract dust  
When they might be given  
To those who could make use of them.  
Poverty is clinging to facts.  
A man who will not throw away a thing he  
doesn't need  
Is every bit as poor  
As a man who has nothing to throw away.

## MY LITTLE BOY

**M**Y little boy holds out his arms and says,  
    "I want to hug you."  
    Then he hugs and kisses  
As long as he likes  
And no one has the heart to put him down  
Or stop his eager lips.  
As often as he, I hold out my arms  
And say the same with my eyes;  
But the response I get is meagre  
For I am grown-up,  
Like those to whom I make my appeal.  
So I sigh and turn away,  
Ageing a little in the interim  
And wishing I were my little boy  
Who loves  
And is loved.

## A FALLING ASH

“**Y**OU remind me of a man I knew some  
years ago,”

Said a friend to me, the other day.

“He was on the old Morning Telegraph.

Very versatile, with a gatling gun mind.

Life never seemed to come fast enough for him.

He always set it the pace.

Drank, loved, talked wildly, raced around ;

Pursuing and playing everything all the time.

Toward the last he hardly went to bed at all.

Wanted to live hard and fast

Fast and loose

And all there was.

“Well, one day he went in to his boss,

Said he’d be damned if he’d work for a living any  
longer,

Threw up his job

Put on his hat

And went up to Central Park.

There he got down on his knees and ate grass,

Like Nebuchadnezzar.

A little later he sent me a telegram :

‘I’m on my way. It’s lot of fun.’

Two hours afterward

I got another from him

Reading: 'I'll be shaking hands with the sun before long.'

And next morning I read in the paper  
That ten minutes after sending me the telegram  
He climbed to the top of the Brooklyn Bridge,  
Threw a gay kiss to the world  
And with a dancing step  
Skipped off into space.  
When they fished him out he was dead."

As my friend finished  
I found myself tingling with pleasure  
In the beautiful story.  
I itched to go up to Central Park  
And begin eating grass.  
But my perennial interest in life  
Jerked me back by the collar.

Before I can step off into the cosmos  
With the grace of a dancing master  
I must increase my pace  
Experience everything interesting in life.  
When the time comes I can think of nothing  
more joyous  
Than jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge  
Unless it would be  
Clambering out a window on the top floor of the  
Woolworth Building  
Some starlit night

And leaping  
With arms outstretched  
To throw around the moon  
And hug her to me.  
My body, giving way to gravity, probably would  
land  
In Fulton Street.  
But my spirit should be at last in the arms of my  
beloved  
And together we would look down to earth and  
cry:  
“Oh, look! There goes a falling ash.”

## KALEIDOSCOPE

**C**HILDLIKE things are always mine :  
Soldiers marching, stiff-legged,  
Through vivid fields,  
With green grass  
Pasted on.

I like  
Calliopes  
Mouth organs  
Jews' harps  
And merry-go-rounds.  
I should like being  
A kaleidoscope,  
Of varied flashings.  
Whirling through life  
A gorgeous, happy maze  
Of blinding color.  
As changeful as  
A child.

## SIT DOWN BESIDE ME, DEAR

**S**IT down beside me, will you, dear,  
For I must dream  
Follow fancies  
With you,  
Walk deserted city streets  
All night,  
Your arm tucked snugly under mine.  
Let us ride shooting stars together,  
Fish for reflected lights  
With long lines  
From the black raised-back of Brooklyn Bridge.  
Let us stop for a beer  
In the back room  
Of an all night saloon,  
Sitting close,  
Listening to the wail of the panhandler  
(Screech owl of a Bowery night.)  
Sit down beside me, dear,  
And let us dream of doing things.  
Of dangling our legs from the sill of a window  
In the Woolworth Tower  
And winking back at the lively stars.  
While sitting smugly in this stuffy room.  
Sit down beside me, dear.

## A NIGHT OF IT

### THE ANTI-MILITARIST BALL

Six sibilant souses.

A tourist or two.

The whole East Side upstanding on its legs, mad  
with dance.

Fat floundering fellow chasing cropped-haired  
girl through balcony.

"Have another drink, Jack."

"Where you goin' afterward?"

"Up to Joel's."

"All right. See you there."

### JOEL'S

Gold-toothed gaiety

Out all night with the cats

Drink nobody needs

Human sympathy

Crass commercialism

Empty words from empty heads

Shallow hearts and third-rail whisky

Piano thumping

Hug-close dancing

Sweltering smelting pot

THE RED MILL

"Check your hat!" 10 c.

Little glass of flat beer. 10 c.

Pistachio nuts from the pimp vendor. 25 c.

Assorted blondes and brunettes. \$2.00 to \$5.00.

Billie the sallow piano player. Priceless.

Lucy the shallow-voice singer. Worth it ail.

## GLOWING BLUE-WHITE BAY-BERRIES

**L**OOKING into your eyes  
I see:  
Glowing blue-white bay-berries.

Mysticism.

Often a row of droll magicians in warm brown  
cloaks march around the delicate rim of  
your iris, in stately procession, carrying  
wands.

Tawny tiger lilies, I see.

Violets.

The meeting, melting, and merging of all quick  
colors, all soft ones; tints and tones, into  
that which makes you most personally you.

Mystery.

Imagery.

Freeness,

Frankness,

All outdoors.

The sum of human beauty I see in your eyes.

## ALADDIN

I AM Aladdin.

Wanting a thing I have but to snap my fingers.

Jinn, bring me a lady

With love light smouldering in her eyes

The lady with the magic kiss

That turns troubles into joys.

The lady of the white soft throat

And shell-like tint cheeks.

Ah, here you are Lady!

Thank you, Jinn.

Lady, sing to me

A song as gorgeous as the plumage of the Bird of  
Paradise.

Music melts in your mouth

Becoming vaporous perfume

Utterly intoxicating me.

No; I will not have you sing more.

You may dance for me a while.

Weave a delirious design for me

With your body,

Ah, you are like a gold fish

Glinting gaily

Darting through sparkling waters.

There, that will do, Lady.

Say you love me, now.

Yes, yes, I believe you.

I could not doubt that voice of yours  
As full of the abandon of expression  
As your dance.  
And now, Lady,  
The Magic Kiss!  
Ummm. That is good.  
Jinn, take her away.

## MICROSCOPIC THINGS

I HAVE forgotten everything in my life that  
is unimportant,  
Uninteresting things I can never remember;  
Details I abhor.

I have never committed a single thing to memory.  
But I know what is going on in me always,  
Every minutest jot of my being,  
Each emotion, I can cut into fractions and  
classify.

Outside details are unworthy my regard  
Having made their place  
By being small.

And yet I cannot wear my shoes in bed.

I hate little things of every sort

Except ants,

Which are so ridiculously industrious,

And the microscopic parasites which live upon  
them without ever working at all.



## COMBINATION SALAD



I PITY publishers.  
They get cross-eyed  
Keeping one eye  
Cocked  
On art  
And the other on business.  
Doing the splits until their crotches are sore.  
Always subject to nervous prostration  
When called upon to write small royalty checks.

ALWAYS my soft heart has beat with adulation  
For people who edit and criticize writing.  
Worthy folk, going about wiping the noses of  
croupy phrases;  
Tucking exclamation-points into strange beds,  
Picking moth webs out of warm, fur-bearing  
sentences,  
And on top of that splitting cords of infinitives,  
To get up an appetite for a book review.  
I hold my breath when I come into the presence  
of these people.  
I feel highly humble.

MINISTERS and religious folk  
Are interior decorators  
Whose taste in conventional design I don't like.  
I am tired of mission furniture and mission stuff.  
If ever I need to call in anybody  
It will be a plasterer  
To cover up with a smooth white finish  
Smudgy spots left on me by bumping into ministers and pious folk in life.

BIG FOOTED people  
Go about stepping on things:  
Ideals, egos—the cosmos  
They crush  
Clod-footedly.  
I should hate to have the epidermis  
Of an ornithornicus  
On the sole of an elephantine foot.  
I prefer skipping lightly across egg shells  
In padded Chinese slippers with blue embroidered tops.

SMUG people are so sweet  
They get along with themselves  
So aimiably.  
I should like to be smug  
And satisfied  
As to right and wrong  
And what you should do  
And what you shouldn't.  
It would give me such a sense of superiority;  
I think I'd take to wearing a watch chain  
Across my proud  
Stomach  
And a crested ring upon my finger.

SOLITAIRE is sad play  
Thumbing the cards alone  
Is pinched fun.  
I should rather be in a game  
With everybody  
Than sitting alone  
Playing against  
Time  
And myself.

OH, today is Easter  
And I must lay an egg.  
It is the custom of the country  
And God shall not find me wanting  
On this glorious day of His.  
I am his humble servant.  
I shall lay an egg  
In His name,  
And refrain from cackling boastfully ;  
Meek in the knowledge  
That it is God's miracle  
Not mine.

I LIKE long prayers,  
The kind that stretch  
Like elastic bands.  
I always sit around,  
Holding my breath,  
Hoping they 'll snap back  
And hit the preacher  
On the nose.

I WILL throw away myself. I will be a thing of civilization. Kept down. I will submit to donning my views ready-made as delivered in my morning newspaper. I will regard the views of my intimates above my own. I will say "Thank you" to the policeman when, park-benched, I feel the poke of his club at the stomach-pit of my dozing self. I will not swear. I will not drink those things that make me more myself. I will not smoke in the subway or defile the Stars and Stripes. But, by God, with or without your husbandly permission, I will crush with caresses the woman I love who loves me.

You turned to me on the street,  
Smiling your professional best;  
And in a soft flash of memory  
I recalled my baby's first smile  
Which I had thought was for me  
Until the nurse heartlessly said it came with colic.

A DANDY, pert little fellow  
Talked to me the other day.  
He was sunny and breezy,  
Clever, glib of tongue and well-bred.  
But he didn't say anything.  
All the time he was talking  
I had a mental picture of him  
Strutting up a conventional Fifth Avenue of  
Thought;  
Out with his Ego on a leash  
For an afternoon's airing.

I KNOW a nice affectionate girl  
Who goes about  
Patting beefsteaks on the back,  
Running her fingers fondly through the beards of  
oysters,  
Holding hands for hours with breaded veal cut-  
lets  
Rubbing noses with pork chops  
And having affairs with boiled onions.  
Her emotional eyes light with amorous interest  
In the presence of food;  
They fill with great glistening tears  
When the plates are taken out  
And she sits despondent  
Weeping gently into her coffee.

I HATE institutions.  
They try to make people  
All alike;  
Shake 'em like cocktail ingredients  
In a patented aluminum mixer,  
And then pour 'em all  
Out of the same containers,—  
A dozen little cocktails  
All alike,  
Each of a flavor identical to the other.  
I thnik the last thing  
I should institute  
Would be an institution.

MY POEMS are popular  
Anywhere but home.  
My family think me  
A rattling good writer  
Of checks.  
But when it comes to poetry  
Of mine  
They shake thoughtful heads  
And withhold their praise  
Until the stuff is sold.

YESTERDAY I lost the job  
Which gave me the right  
To dream  
And make poetry.  
But today does not find me back  
At dull work.  
I shall starve my habits  
My stomach  
And my family.  
I cannot starve my soul.

I'M TIRED of hearing praises sung  
To pale cheeked  
Sad eyed  
Virgins  
Who kept the vestal lights aglow.  
I sing to the red-cheeked  
Healthy  
Modern maids  
Who keep the cheery  
Red lights burning.

## SEED PEARLS



I AM a fine fellow  
With lots of friends :  
I pay for their dinners.  
With poor people I am  
Hale, well-met :  
I drop money into their hats.  
Everybody likes me  
While he needs me :  
I give him what I have.  
Oh, I am popular  
With many, many people  
Who dip into my supply  
Of this and that.

I KNOW a cellar  
Where human rats hang out ;  
Narrow-eyed  
Fat and mangey.  
Gliding through their runs ;  
Greasy  
Smelly ;  
Leaving their marks on me  
And every thing.

I WISH burglars would stay away  
When I want to write late at night.  
Their squeaky shoes get on my nerves,  
I cannot concentrate.  
If they only wouldn't  
Incessantly rattle the silver  
In dropping it into their black bags  
And slam and poke around so,  
Leaving draughty doors open.  
Why the devil don't they stay  
In their own homes  
Nights  
And go to sleep  
And not bungle about,  
Bothering me?

A THING need not be high-sounding,  
Puffed with importance,  
To prove its right to existence.  
It may be only a glint,  
A gleam,  
A glimmer,  
As simple as this suggestion,  
To be interesting  
And worth a printer's trouble  
Dirtying his hands  
To set it up in type.

I AM hungry,  
I have fed my body on beefsteak,  
Camembert and brussels sprouts;  
My mind on books,  
Plays and argument;  
My emotions on love, anger and sorrow.  
But my psychic self is starved.  
I hear it hollering for a good meal  
Of fourth dimensional food.  
Something more than victuals for  
Body, mind and soul  
I crave.  
I should like to take a big bite  
Out of the red-cheeked cosmos.

COB-WEBS in the corner,  
Grey and dusty,  
Let them stay,  
They make the room look lived in.

Cob-webs in my brain,  
Grey and dusty,  
I'll keep them there  
To catch butterflies  
That might flit through  
If I kept cleaning out  
(Like an efficient housewife)  
All the funny little corners  
Of my mind.

MY SAD moments are never my best.  
People like me  
And I like myself  
Better  
When I am fully illuminated,  
Lit up,  
A candle in every window of my house.  
I will not draw the blinds of my soul  
Or put out the lights.  
I will go around lighting them all,  
Trimming the wicks,  
Putting new candles in place of old,  
Keeping every light burning.

COLORLED flowers I like,  
Better than white.  
Instinctively I pick out  
Shirts gay of hue  
Instead of blank-bosomed ones.  
I like crazy quilts  
Better than sheets.  
My taste is for tints.  
I'll take pink lemonade  
In preference to a glass of water.  
I like chocolate colored candy  
And chocolate colored folks.

A FELLOW I know  
Is going to Paris  
For a while  
Because he's sick.  
I shouldn't care to  
Go to Paris  
Unless I were  
Strong  
And  
Well.

THE BEATEN track is not for me  
I will not follow  
A fixed course  
Knocking my ankles  
Against the edges of ruts.  
I can not prune back the branchings of my being  
I must let them grow ;  
Wild, if they like.  
Running all over the place.

MY SOUL struggles for articulation  
Seeking always new mediums  
Of more expressive speech.  
I would talk with my ears.  
Waft a meaning from my finger tips;  
Rising to full self expression  
In a significant wriggle of my toes.

I CANNOT starve  
I am productive.  
I will never be poor  
With all there is in me.  
I am rich in things.  
But I will not work  
For money;  
I must play for it.

God, give me liquid  
Anything that flows  
I am parched  
I must not dry up  
And wither in the sun of life  
Like a cut flower.  
God give me liquid;  
Anything to drink.

COLOR

I must have.

Fantasy.

Blue enamel cuff buttons

And a melting yellow tie

With olive green grotesqueries

At play upon it.

Appreciation

I desire.

Sensuousness.

I would have a polished black girl

With burnished eyes

In love with me

And I would

Wriggle my hand like a

Fluttering gold fish

Along her warm back

Until she

Purred.



CANDIED FOUR-LEAF CLOVER



HOMES ARE little hells  
Where folks do time  
Stewing and suffering  
Trying to live  
By killing each other.

A FALLING star  
Is a planet  
Committing suicide.  
Rushing through the heavens  
In headlong descent  
To a greater astral plane.

LIVING BY my own laws  
Which are not strict,  
I seldom have occasion to  
Arrest myself.

DAMN anybody  
With cheap ambitions ;  
I will be  
God.

I AM impassioned ;  
Alive with lust for living.  
I shall die dancing.

AMATEUR PREACHERS are all right  
In their sincere  
Humble way.  
But God save me  
From professionals.

I LIKE men who are  
Old women,  
And sit around all day  
Numbing their minds,  
Chewing their tongues,  
Between spasms of gossiping.

SLEEPING ALONE is a silly thing.  
One is so much alone by day.  
It should seem good at night  
To lie down with sheep and cows and people  
And slip away from one's senses  
With the grass, the rock and the ground.

LOOKING into your eyes I doubt their sincerity,  
Listening to you talk I question your motive,  
Seeing your smile I wonder what's behind it.  
In you I am always feeling about for falsity,  
Suspecting you of being human.

SNORING is mussy music.  
Yet people have to sleep.  
I should rather have them always awake  
And singing.

WHY SHOULD I read  
When writing entertains me more?  
And what use to me are words:  
*I can hum.*

READING the Sunday papers  
I wonder why God gives us comics on that day  
And the church  
Disputes  
Our right to laugh at them  
Till Monday.

Just to be together  
For two little minutes,  
Or three.  
I want nothing more  
Except spending  
The whole of my life with you.

I AM hating you hard today  
Knowing that it is only  
Another form  
Of hating myself.

THE HOWLING wind has no superstition ;  
It is one.  
I should rather  
Be  
A superstition  
Than fear one.

DAMN FOLKS who cackle.  
I hate hens.  
Suspecting them of boasting.  
Sensing that they feel superior.  
I don't think I'd cackle if I *could* lay an egg.

I COULD cry myself to sleep  
If I didn't feel like laughing hard.  
Life would play grim jokes on me  
If its jokes were not so funny.

*You.*

Blossoms and rain  
Trickles and petals  
You ring in my ears

YOU SHALL work to make my living  
While I only sing you songs  
And that is as it should be,  
For I must sing to live,  
While you must work.

## MY WILL



## MY WILL.

**J**UDGE of the Probate Court;  
This is my will.  
Patterned after Villon's  
Greater Testament  
Rather than written  
On the stereotyped blank  
Provided  
By the legal fraternity  
(To whom I leave  
Ninety per cent of the  
Property of  
All helpless widows.  
I leave it them with a laugh,  
Knowing they will get it  
Anyway.)  
And to you, beskirted, bewhiskered,  
Befuddled  
Judge  
I bequeath a book—  
The Rubaiyat—  
A book of the law of life and  
Love;  
For you to drool over,  
Smudging its pages with your  
Thick thumbs,  
Its meaning with your  
Thick mind.

I give to all people their due  
Of me  
After I am dead.  
Ministers may have my soul  
(They will not recognize it  
Until it is a corpse.  
I dare them to touch it  
Before it's cold.)  
Doctors can come to my coffin  
On a germ-collecting expedition  
Butterfly nets in readiness to  
Catch my germs ajump.  
(Margaret Brewster shall have my  
Appendix then.)  
And I leave a whole plateful of  
T. B's  
For my friend Doc Dope.  
My banker shall have my  
Pass book  
To balance to his  
Entire satisfaction,  
And to my broker I leave  
Six per cent of anything he wants,  
With an extra  
Commission of  
One-eighth on  
Everything,  
And a bonus to pay  
The Government tax.

To bar-keeps who have mixed  
Bad cocktails  
I return the chlorosis of the liver  
They have thoughtlessly  
Bestowed on me.  
But to the good mixers  
I give  
A bumper of my  
Joy of Life  
Topped with a stiff,  
Sugar-powdered sprig of  
Mint.  
(My cellar will be found full  
Of the good things I have  
Bottled  
Every year of my life,  
And some of the best vintages  
Are marked for the  
Booze boys and old  
Hippolyte Havel.)  
My family can have all the  
Patience  
I have left at death.  
(They would have got it  
Anyway.)  
I make no specific  
Bequests  
To my children:  
They had all I could give them

The day they were conceived.  
To editors I leave  
Copies of  
English and  
How to Abuse It.  
My butcher shall have  
My weak-springed  
Postal scale  
Which always  
Over-weighed.  
And my last cent  
Shall be paid  
On account  
To the fat-faced  
Grinning grocer.  
My landlord  
(Rest his gentle soul)  
Shall have a pew  
Rent-free  
In hell.  
And every pious, hypocritical soul in  
Tenaflly  
Shall have my thumb  
To put to his nose  
By way of  
Final benediction.  
In life I have been a miser,  
Storing up things to leave  
People.

Things they need most.  
I give every love-longing girl  
A beautiful boy  
To fondle.  
Every prostitute a  
Pimp.  
Anybody is at liberty to take from my estate  
The things he most needs.  
I give all timid married folk  
Their freedom,  
All wage-slaves  
Overalls.  
(Knowing they'd have no use for  
Rest, or anything else.)  
I've set aside a fund for cannibals  
To spend printing tracts in Igorotte  
To educate and save the souls of  
Missionaries  
Through healthy heathen idols.  
I leave to Carnegie a  
Library  
Of revolutionary books  
He's never read,  
And set aside a  
Can of kerosene to  
Be poured  
Over Rockefeller's funeral pyre.  
The blood of the Lamb I bequeath  
To Billy Sunday and

All bloody revivalists.  
Bombs to anarchists  
And the nerve to use them.  
Shoes to the children of  
Boot-makers.  
The Bully Medal I have devised  
To be given in the name of Law  
To every policeman  
Who distinguishes himself  
At clubbing human heads.  
And I would have a  
Memorial tablet  
Placed in my favorite saloon  
Above an ever-running  
Tap of beer  
With the inscription :  
"Bacchus said, 'Let there be beer  
And there was beer.' "  
A dark dingy park I leave  
Filled with benches  
For hobbling hags  
Whisky soaks and bums  
To sleep sweetly upon,  
Undisturbed by cops.  
The playful part of me  
Shall go  
To my sweetheart  
(Who would miss it most,)  
And the serious side of myself  
Must be divided exactly in three equal parts

Among my wife, brother-in-law and  
Fritz Krog,  
(A trio who will be overwhelmed  
By my munificence.)  
My mother  
(Rest her indulgent soul)  
Shall inherit  
Every little by-product of  
Me  
Which might have gone to swell  
The Book of Golden Deeds,  
Compiled by a Superintendent  
Of the Sunday School.  
I hate leaving something to myself  
After I am gone.  
It seems presumptuous  
Selfish,  
And yet I might  
Return  
Resurrected (like Christ)  
And look around  
For a start of some kind;  
And the first thing I  
Should miss  
Would be  
My independence  
Impudence  
Ego.  
So to myself I leave that  
Unholy Trinity.

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